DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 733 SO 031 905

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TITLE Building Geography Skills and Community Understanding with Constructivist Teaching Methods.
PUB DATE 2000-05-00
NOTE 117p.; Masters of Arts Action Research Project, St. Xavier.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Education; Constructivism (Learning); Cooperative Learning; *Geography; Grade 2; Map Skills; Multiple Intelligences; Primary Education; Public Schools; Rural Education; *Social Studies

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program designed to enhance social studies skills and knowledge. The target areas for enhancement are geography skills and community understanding. The targeted population is a second grade class in a rural Midwestern setting. The need for strengthening these skills was documented by observation, checklists, surveys, and pre- and post-tests. An analysis of the probable cause for lack of geography skills revealed that students do not have good definitions of geography and community or why they are important. Many thought they liked maps, but did not have a grasp of their purpose. The literature reviewed indicated that young children are not cognitively able to grasp some concepts set forth in geography. A review of the solution strategies proposed by the research found in pertinent literature and combined with an analysis of the problem in the given setting identified several strategies for remediation. Constructivist learning methods, cooperative learning groups, and multiple intelligences were the main focus of the interventions chosen to help the students in this second grade class. Post-intervention data upheld the premise that these strategies would serve to raise the students' skills and understanding in the areas of geography and community. Following the intervention, they not only liked maps, but they also understood and used them well with the knowledge that all people in community situations share the common need to understand and be informed about their world. (Author/LB)

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ED 442 733

BUILDING GEOGRAPHY SKILLS AND COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING WITH CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING METHODS

Kathy Whiteside

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Kathy D. Whiteside

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St. Xavier University and SkyLight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2000

SO 031 905

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for enhancing student skills in the area of social studies. The specific target areas are geography skills and community understanding. The targeted population is a second grade class in a rural Midwestern setting. The need for enhancing these skills was documented by observation, checklists, surveys and pre and post tests.

An analysis of the probable cause for lack of knowledge in geography skills coming from the documentation, showed that students do not have a good definition of geography and community or why they should be important. Many thought they liked maps, but did not have a grasp of their purpose. The literature reviewed for this paper also added the perspective that young children are not in a position to cognitively grasp some concepts set forth in geography.

In reviewing the solution strategies proposed by research in pertinent literature combined with an analysis of the problem in the given setting several strategies for remediation were chosen. Constructivist learning methods, cooperative learning groups and multiple intelligences were the main focus of the interventions chosen to help students in this second grade class.

Post-intervention data upheld the premise that these strategies would serve to raise the students skill and understanding in the areas of geography and community. Now, not only did they like maps, they could understand and use them well in the context of knowing that all people in community situations share the common need to understand and be informed about their world.

DEDICATION

TO NORMAN CHASE AND TAMSIN MEHEUX-CHASE

Your support in so many ways.. tea, cookies, and a listening ear ...was important.

Thank you!!

and to

Sadie, Chloe and Nutmeg

because dogs never lie about love

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

There is evidence of the existence of a problem in teaching social studies, specifically geography, to children in the classroom at the elementary level. Surveys from the National Council for Geographic Education show that United States students' geography knowledge has a ranking far below that of students in the countries of England, Japan, Germany and Canada. (National Council for Geographic Education, 1992). They do not understand or retain a succinct knowledge of their local surroundings and those of the world in general. Many discussions and writings about why geography is important and how it should be taught have caused only further conflict among educators and no one answer to the problems was found. (Liben & Downs 1997). One of the proposed approaches uses constructivism. Using the method of constructivism teaches children to learn from what they do in projects, encourages self directed inquiry and uses other kinds of hands on activities. Therefore, an expected result will be a better understanding and awareness of geography.

The classroom targeted for this research project is a second grade class at one site in a small Midwest community. Teacher observations, anecdotal records, checklists, tests and surveys have been used to confirm the reality and extent of this problem.

Local Context of the Problem

The targeted elementary school is in a Midwestern village 30 miles either way from two larger cities. It is part of a 113 square mile district. It houses approximately 70 students. Students now in grades one through four, in four self contained classrooms will eventually attend the unit middle school and high school. The half day kindergarten for this village is located in the neighboring schools about four miles away. A second grade classroom in this building will be the targeted one for this project on improving social studies skills in geography

One hundred percent of the students are white, with 13.4% comprising the low income section of the population. Student attendance is a high 96.5% while student mobility is 18.8%, and chronic truancy is 0.0%. An average class size for this particular school is 22 children. (School Report Card 1998).

The school's mission, Together Everyone Achieves More, (TEAM) encourages students, teachers, and families to be actively involved. The school employs 12 people who provide quality instructional support to their students. Included in this teaching staff is a half time reading improvement teacher. Many staff members travel between buildings. These include: physical education., speech, music, a physical therapist, librarian and the principal. There is no Title I service in this building.

The building is an old two story brick structure that was originally built as a high school in 1920. The year 1947 marked its remodeling to the elementary building it now houses. Due to the community being very family oriented this building is where many of the present students' parents and possibly grandparents, attended during their early academic years. It has many cheerful paintings on the walls, much of it art work done by the children. There is a cozy library a kitchen where food is homemade and the playground has real grass.

The second grade classroom on which this project is being centered is located on the second floor of the building. It is approximately 15x20 ft. in size and has one long white board on the south wall. There are three bulletin boards used to display a variety of activities, children's work and seasonal collections. All desks are free standing so they can be arranged in many different ways to accommodate learning styles and cooperative activities. The only subjects of the elementary curriculum not taught in this room are library, music and physical education. Three computers are available for classroom use and are linked to the unit network and the internet.

District

The primary mission of the school district is to provide learning success for all students. Emphasis is placed on creating an effective school climate by the positive, caring reinforcement of each student's efforts and achievements. Learning is the primary focus at all times. Well defined priorities are given for teaching and learning as well as explicit standards for behavior. A considerable amount of parental involvement takes place in this district as a general rule.

There are three different elementary buildings within the district, but they do not all follow the same educational agenda. That allows for more individualization in fulfilling the needs of each child. For example, just because one teacher has a spelling book not all teachers in that level must use a book, but can generate their spelling list from reading. It is also possible to increase or decrease the number of words per child to suit the learning need. The program for education in our district is considered to be building based.

The entire district is made up of five educational facilities: three elementary buildings, one middle school and one high school. The high school and middle school have an average enrollment of 500 students in each building and a quality education with competitive college preparation courses provided. Approximately 80% of the students who graduate from this district continue in some form of higher education.

The pupil/teacher ratio for the district is 17.1:1. The average teacher's experience in the classroom is 14.2 years, while 43.7% of the teachers hold a master's degree or above. An average teacher's salary is $38,659, while the average administrator's salary is $60,964. This district's operating expenditure per pupil is $4,683 per year, which is significantly lower than other schools in the state. (School Report Card 1998).

An objective based curriculum has been developed by teachers and administrators in the form of curriculum guides that follow the state standards. All curriculums are reviewed and updated on a rotating basis to ensure this alignment with state goals. The current focus is in the area of math. Each

curriculum area provides objectives that are appropriate at each grade level. The curriculum areas taught in each level are fine arts, language arts, math, physical education, science and social studies. Criterion referenced tests were developed by teachers to provide assessment in each area. The tests are used to correlate the curriculum to the students' learning. Parental input to curriculum and other educational decisions is provided by a Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Communication between the school district and the community exists in the form of a quarterly district newsletter, a school report card, local newspaper and a student edited page that appears in the local paper every third week. In addition, mid nine weeks reports are sent home and parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year to allow parents and instructors the extra time needed to communicate regarding concerns and successes.

An educational audit was conducted by the State Board of Education. An analysis of the data concluded that the schools in this district meet and exceed the state requirements.

Surrounding Community

The village in which the targeted school resides was established in 1888 with the arrival of the railroad. Area cattlemen requested the railroad company to build siding and stock pens so that the cattle could easily be shipped from the area. Businesses of all kinds soon began to serve the growing agriculturally based region. Shortly following the development of the village, the religion that remains to this day was established. Education was also one of the first

important priorities in this village. In 1894, a petition was circulated on behalf of the public school, and the first one-room school house was built in that year.

There were 450 residents recorded in the last official census of 1990, but information from the village hall approximates this to have risen to as least 600 by 1999. Four small businesses related to the agriculture industry employ some community people, but many travel to larger cities outside the village for work. The community is comprised of 100% Caucasian with the median age of 34.8. Household incomes average $33,333. Two rather unique aspects of this small community are the volunteer fire department, established in 1954, and the village library, begun in 1978.

Strong religious ties continue to play an important role in the life of this community and have a direct impact on the school. Family values of involvement with their children and support for the teachers keep many parents involved on a regular basis. This commitment serves to enhance the school environment and make the targeted school one of those pleasant and safe places to live and work.

National Context of the Problem

According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) the subject of Social Studies has vital disciplines and ideas that will help young people place themselves in the world (1994). The National Council for Geographic Education stated in 1999 that : Geography is the study of places on Earth and their relationship with each other. Often the study of geography begins with one's home community and expands as a person gains greater experience.

Thus, geography provides a conceptual link for children between home, school, and the world beyond.

Another study done by O'Mahony (1992) states that as many as 20% of American high school seniors cannot locate the United States on a world map. He continues his campaign for a better social studies program in the area of geography by stating, "We've got to face facts and geography is here to stay! We need it and our children especially need it so they can survive and be responsible contributors in tomorrow's world." (p.3)

Why has geography become such an issue? Surveys done by the NCGE, O'Mahony, Sommers, and Liben (1992,1997) state that United States students rank in their geography knowledge far below students in other countries such as Japan, England, Germany and Canada. The field of social studies education was brought to the U.S. from Europe. There it had developed as a geographic study. The United States linked social studies to social issues; therefore, geography took a back seat (O'Mahony, 1992). Teachers have now been given the directive to correct this situation in the classroom. However, they have also been given too many choices as to how to do this with limited direction or instruction to make the teaching of geography effective and useful to the student (Schug & Cross, 1998).

As a result of the Goals 2000 Education Act, the NCSS has been developing a new program to stress the importance of teaching geography in social studies with the importance it deserves. Working with a program from the 1970's called organic curriculum and combing the ideas of their committee and

others, NCSS plans to implement a multidisciplinary program that begins in first grade. The program will include methods and content taught in a constructivist lesson plan that will give children the opportunity to be a part of their own learning. "This program is grounded in the real world that children live in everyday" as stated by Lawrence Senesh et al. (1993) the founder of organic curriculum.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Second grade students at the targeted elementary school do not have a good idea of what social studies geography is all about and why it is important to understand it in connection with the community in which they live. Many of them thought that maps and social studies would be interesting, but had no idea, at this point how to go about increasing their learning.

Interviews done with the other teachers (Appendix A) in the building at different grade levels showed some insight and results are seen below in Table 1. Surveys done with the parents (Appendix A) revealed that they did not think enough was being done in the area of social studies at the elementary level. Finally surveys given to the students (Appendix A) showed some ambiguity over social studies concepts. They had ideas that they were interested in, but were not really sure of the subject matter. Lessons and student work are shown in Appendix C and D. The information from the above mentioned surveys plus pretests, checklists and teacher observation were used to gain baseline information that is shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3. They indicate the students' understanding and abilities in the targeted area. The following lists and Tables show these results as baseline data. An explanation of the information follows each.

Table 1 Teacher Questionnaire

I enjoy teaching social studies	3 teachers said yes	2 teachers said at times I do	
Geography is part of what I teach	3 teachers said yes	2 teachers said at times	
The children understand geography concepts	2 teachers said yes	1 teacher said at times	2 teacher said no
Geography skill are important	5 teachers said yes		

There were four questions asked of the teachers. The first question was: Did they enjoy teaching social studies? Of the five teachers three said yes and two said they enjoyed it at times. Question number two was: Is geography a part of what I teach? Three of the teachers again said yes it was and two said at times they taught geography. Then they were asked if they believed that the

children understood geography. This time only two teachers said yes, one teacher said at times and the last teacher said no. The final question brought them all into agreement. Question number five was: Is geography an important skill? All five of the teachers said yes.

Each of these teachers having given careful consideration to the survey also had comments:

- we need more materials and ideas on how to create meaning in social studies with hands on experiences and ways to integrate it into other areas
- map skills are important
- as they grow their understanding of the world increases and they need to be aware of and remain current with social studies events
- materials need to be grade level and cognitive level
- good geography skills would help them in understanding the world and its problems
- more hands on activities with maps

From the surveys and the comments these five teachers have made it can be surmised that they think students need a better grasp of geographic knowledge because it is an important skill. One of the important ways they think this could be accomplished is through hands-on activities.

There are 17 students in the targeted classroom and two surveys were given to each student. The first survey failed because the teacher/researcher

made it too complicated and did not give enough instructions on how to fill it out. However, many of the comments the children made were good. A few are included here:

- I like maps, they are fun to look at.
- I bet maps are fun.
- I like learning.
- I like social studies, I think.
- I like a map to look at, but I do not like geography.

Part of the intervention plan will be to help children understand more about not only their community, but communities in general. We will address such questions as why people live where they do and why do they have the jobs they do. Does it have any connection to the geography of a place? When the class was given a map of the United States and asked to place their state only 4 out of the 17 placed it correctly. When asked to place their town in their state there were no correct responses. So from the smaller area of community to the larger area of placing themselves in the world they have difficulty. This teacher/ researcher believes it is a gap in learning that cannot be ignored.

The second survey results (Table 2) were much more telling because the survey had been reworked to make it a better tool. The children had a much easier time answering the questions and the information was therefore more accurate.

Table 2 What Happens in Social Studies?

learn a lot	1 no	15 yes	1 maybe

draw maps	1 no	8 yes	8 maybe
make projects	2 no	13 yes	2 maybe
geography is good	1 no	2 yes	7 maybe
maps are useful	2 no	8 yes	7 maybe
I know geography	10 no	4 yes	2 maybe
I know other places	1 no	5 yes	11 maybe
I want to learn more	1 no	13 yes	4 maybe

On a few of the questions no response was given . That is why some statements do not add up to a total of 17. There were eight statements in the survey that children were asked to respond with a no, yes or maybe.
When asked if they could learn a lot in social studies 15 said yes, while only one said no and one said maybe. When asked if they liked to draw maps eight said yes, and eight said maybe while only one said no. This is because they were unsure of their ability to do so and therefore not willing to commit. That they liked to make projects brought about 13 yes, two no and two maybe responses. When asked if geography was good there were some surveys left blank, but two said yes, one said no and seven said maybe. The statement, "maps are useful" brought eight yes responses, two no and seven maybe. Asking them if they already knew about geography was a very informative question because four said yes, ten said no and two said maybe. That told me they were understanding

of their own limited knowledge. When asked if they knew about other places only five thought yes they did, one said no and 11 said maybe. The final statement checked with them to see if they were interested to learn more brought the majority of 13 saying yes, one no and four maybe.

In analyzing this survey the teacher/researcher would be led to believe that the children are interested in learning more, but at this time do not have a good understanding of this topic. Comments on this survey were as follows:

- I want to learn about mountains.
- I do want to learn about geography.
- I like projects.
- I want to know what Social Studies is.
- I do not know if I like Social Studies.
- It might be fun.
- Geography is no fun.
- I am interested to begin.

Table 3 Student Survey II

This is set up so 4 means the top of the scale and 1 the bottom.

	4most	3ok	2not sure	1least
like social studies	4	9	3	1
easy	3	9	3	1
projects	6	6	4	1
group work	10	4	2	

work alone	6	5	4	1
important	6	5	5	
hard	4	4	2	6

This table shows that of the 17 students an average of 12 of them think that social studies is important and filled with projects. Their opinions are split on whether or not it is a hard subject. Most of them like it and think it involves projects. The largest percentage of them would rather do group work. This information helped to guide me in the planning of my intervention.

Parents were given a nine question survey with a comment section. The table that follows outlines their responses.

Table 4 Parent Survey

child likes social studies	14 yes	1 no	2 sometimes
talks about social studies	6 yes	3 no	8 sometimes
feels success	9 yes	1 no	7 sometimes
likes geography	11 yes	2 no	4 sometimes
read a map	6 yes	5 no	6 sometimes
city /state difference	11 yes	0 no	6 sometimes

do hands-on for learning	16 yes	0 no	1 sometimes
geography is important	17 yes	0 no	0 sometimes
social studies is important to me	15	0 no	2 sometimes

In this survey I believe the parents were very honest and open about their answers. The majority of them thought that their child liked social studies and geography. Most of them thought that hands-on learning would be appropriate and that geography was important. Eighty percent of them thought social studies was important to them personally. When it came to reading a map or feeling successful about social studies only about one third of them thought their child fell into those categories.

From the teacher's perspective I found the survey to be quite informative in that parents were well aware of their child's interests and knowledge to a certain degree. Though they did believe that their children had more knowledge than what the tests results showed. For example, on question six when parents thought that their child knew the difference between a city and a state I saw a different result in the classroom. Children do not usually understand the difference between a city and a state until they have had several lessons to familiarize them with why they are different and then, if given new information, they will often confuse them once again. Parents did have an overwhelmingly positive response to the questions about hands-on projects and the importance

of geography. That, plus the fact that the children's surveys indicated they would learn from projects and group work, helped to set the stage for my constructivist approach.

The parents' comments were informative and also helped to guide my teaching:

- We think today's children do not know enough about social studies and where other countries are
- Social studies was my favorite subject.
- I do not think enough time is given to geography in the elementary grades or at home. I think social studies is tied too much to textbooks.
- Hands on activities would really increase interest and learning.
- As far as I know my child has not had a lot of exposure to social studies and geography as of yet.

These results from teachers, students and parents surveys give good indication that there is a lack of knowledge in the area of geography in our social studies curriculum. The planned intervention will work to close the gap between present understanding and needed knowledge.

PROBABLE CAUSE

There are many reasons why children are confused by geography and its connection with their community. Part of the reason is certainly that as children grow and change so does their cognitive processes. Some of what map reading skills entail is just beyond their ability until a certain point in time (Gregg, 1997).

Map reading is a complex process that many first graders may not be able to do. Second graders with the help of well defined exercises can be capable of acquiring this knowledge. It is up to the teacher/researcher to set the stage for this complex process. Blanchard (1999) stated "there is the inconsistency of both educational and political leaders in framing a vision."(p.64) If the leaders are not certain of the goal then the children and their teachers cannot be certain of the path to get there. Much of what is done in geography is built upon previous skills of the student. When we consider that seven to nine year olds have been in school only three years they cannot be expected to have the background knowledge it takes to be skillful in geography. Yet this does not give us license to say 'wait until they are older' to start teaching this subject. In a paper written in 1997, Blaut emphatically states that children must begin to learn the skills of geography early so that they have the background necessary for future skill building. Firm and specific plans must be set in motion from the very beginning of their education.

Here is another part of the problem. Geography and community skills have been incorporated into the social end of our history rather than the educational end. Geographers like Rousseau, Ritter and Keltie had conducted systematic studies in geography backed by the Royal Geographic Society as early as 1830. This brought about the teaching of courses in geography in most European countries and the United States taught it as only a small part of the whole educational picture. (O'Mahony, 1992). So many repetitious changes in education, same program with a new name, without any real substantive change

have left a gap. Within the last 5 years a nine nation survey found that one in five Americans, 18 to 24 years old, could not locate the U.S. on an outline map of the world. Only in America did the 18 to 24 year olds know less than people 55 or over. In all eight other countries young adults knew more than their older counterparts. (U.S. Dept. of Education 1996). These startling statistics have come about because in other countries such as England, Canada, and the Soviet Union geography is considered one of the basic academic subjects while only one in seven secondary students in the U.S. takes a geography course.

The issue of children's understanding of community has not been so well researched as their lack of understanding in geography. However, from this researcher's teaching experience, and the evidence of observation checklists and tests, it can be said that part of the problem remains the same as with their geography learning. They just do not have the cognitive skills to put together the big picture. If the children have not moved from their original home they also have a sense of everything just always having been there. They do not recognize their place in relation to the world around them because they have no prior knowledge on the subject.

O'Mahony (1992) suggests that community awareness begins at home. Parents should talk with their preschoolers about "what the parents do for a living and why." They should take mini field trips from the farm to the city and discuss the differences. For some, this seems a time consuming task, but it will help create a series of experiences on which the child can draw from in his/her later learning. By contrast, if a child has done a lot of moving he/she may not be able

to establish himself/herself in a community with family and friends. Then he/she cannot put together a picture of what a community is – a social group whose members reside in the same locale—and why it can be important and helpful.

A final reason for the probable cause of this problem is that teachers have not been well informed enough about the need to teach and connect geography and community because: 1) They were not adequately prepared during teacher training. 2) They have not kept current on the best ways to teach the subject. 3) They feel the pressure to teach and be accountable in so many other subjects in which testing has become a state mandated issue.(Berson, Ouzts and Walsh 1999).

Helping every child develop his or her ability to use maps and to understand his/or her community as a priority, is a necessary conclusion according to Stanley Brunn, (1993) researcher at the University of Kentucky. The NAEP in 1994 states:

> Geography presents a framework for addressing local, regional, national, global questions. Through geographic inquiry, which fosters critical thinking skills, students learn that the spatial distribution and arrangements of people, places, and events are critical elements in a comprehensive knowledge of their world.

Assistance in achieving these goals can come through the cooperation of all facets of education in trying to create a balanced atmosphere of learning to benefit each child to reach his/her potential in social studies learning. Use of the NCSS standards for geographic education should be made widely known to

educators. In their planning for the classroom educators may incorporate them in a sequence of learning that will benefit the students in gaining social studies skill.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The National Assessment of Educational Progress Board (NAEP) defines the mission statement for teaching geography as follows:

> The purpose of geography education is to foster the development of citizens who will actively seek and systematically apply the knowledge and skills of geography in life situations. Geography education must be responsive to the abilities and needs of students to the societal and workplace requirements of the community, the nation and the world. Through rigorous instruction and an adaptable K-12 curriculum, geography education helps prepare students to cope with the complexities of contemporary life.

Yet much research exists to say that our school children do not have a good grasp on many geography concepts (Sommers, 1997). A reasonable response by educators would then be to change their approach to teaching of geography so as to facilitate this mission.

The intention of this paper is to show that the students' skills in geography and community understanding can be enhanced by the use of constructivism in the classroom (Duffy & Savery 1995 as cited in Herman1999). A few definitions will help begin the process. Geography is the study of places on the Earth and their relationship with each other. Often the study of geography begins with

one's home community and expands as a person gains a greater knowledge base and experience. Thus geography can provide a link for children between home, school, and the world beyond (National Council for Geographic Education1998). Community is defined as a group connected socially, economically and with family ties; residing in the same locality. When children are able to understand where they are in the world and understand how communities function as they do, it will prepare them to be better citizens locally and nationally. The NAEP, in 1994, formulated a mission statement that defines the importance of geographic learning:

> As the world becomes more interconnected through technological advancement and shared concerns about economic, political, social, and environmental issues, the need for geographic knowledge increases. Conditions and events occurring around the world, in industrialized nations as well as in less developed ones, affect the social and economic well-being of our citizens. ..... Comprehensive knowledge, understanding, and application of geography's content and perspectives are essential to responsible citizenship because geography brings coherence to the causes and effects of physical and human events that occur on the Earth's surface.

However, there are some barriers to this understanding. Surveys show that the United States students' geography knowledge ranks far below students in other countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada. (NAEP, 1994). An even more disheartening report shows geographic knowledge has declined over the years so now many children cannot read maps, locate states, cities, important physical features or even continents (Blanchard, Senesh and Patterson-Black, 1999). This lack of knowledge is not only a possible embarrassment, but as all other forms of global technology and expansion occur, it could be a threat to our country's status as a leader.(Warf, 1998).

Demko (1992) reported on a quiz administered to students in many countries in which the Americans ranked last. He reported that 45% of the junior and senior students in a Baltimore high school could not locate the U.S. on a map of the world. There were 39% of Boston's high school graduates who could not name the six New England states, and on a map of the world some of them placed Boston in Tibet. At a Texas school 25% of the high school students could not name the country directly south of Texas, and in North Carolina 69% of 2,200 students could not name a single African country south of the Sahara. Ptolemy (circa BC 1492) said that " Geography is a representation of the whole known world together with the phenomenon which are contained therein." If our students cannot find places on a map, ' in the whole known world', how will they ever understand and fit into all that goes on as our world, technologically and culturally, grows ever smaller?

National Geographic Society President Gilbert Grosvenor (1995 as cited in the NAEP bulletin) said, "We are a nation of people with world wide aspirations and involvements, a nation whose global influence and responsibilities demand an understanding of the lands and cultures of the world. But, geography, once an integral part of a child's education, has lost its foothold in American schools." We must look deeper into historical circumstances to understand why geography education is the way it is in our schools at this time.

The study of geography underwent a major change in Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century. While it was becoming firmly established as an academic discipline in schools and colleges in Europe here in the U.S. it was linked to social issues, for the most part, and overlooked as a study in its own right (O'Mahony, 1992). Also, knowing how to teach the academics of geography, as well as what to teach, has not been made a priority in teacher training institutions (NCGE, 1996). Somehow, our teachers must also be included in the move toward improving the results of social studies learning.

Over the past 15 years many educational reforms have been tried. One of the main banners has been that students do not know how to problem solve (Leming, 1998). They lack higher order thinking skills for several reasons: 1) broad superficial coverage of the content in a subject, 2) teacher expectations and lack of planning time, 3) children cognitively not ready for the material taught (Herman, 1999). Because learning comes in stages of cognitive development the social studies curriculum must also be organized and developed to give students a rich flow of information over the school years so

that geography can become more meaningful as they grow into new stages of higher order reflective thought. (Schug & Cross 1998).

There is another problem in teaching social studies that is reflected in the poor scores seen on tests. Spatial knowledge is an important geographic concept. (Cammack, et al. 1996). As we experience places in geography we learn to generalize about them and take that knowledge to more abstract categories. In the teaching of social studies there is a hierarchy to the better understanding of space and place. It has been shown that the information is best learned by starting with the neighborhood and moving through to city-state-region-country and world. However, because there have been so many approaches by so many different teachers and researchers, with no set goals, the hierarchy has been virtually ignored and children end up with no clear picture in geography (Barnes, 1998).

Another point of view about the failure of social studies instruction to meet the needs of students is raised by curriculum leaders. Researhers blame the academic failure in social studies on the push towards integrated curriculum (Schug & Cross 1998). Several myths are cited as the cause for why integration does not work: 1) there is a lot of support for it, 2) elementary schools do it better, 3) integration leads to more time for all subjects, 4) curriculum integration leads to higher order thinking. The supporters of integration (Schug & Cross, 1998) say that if these myths could be would make social studies in the classroom a more fulfilling experience. Teaching must be very structured and organized in order to use integration successfully. However, many times

educators do not have enough separate and specific knowledge of the topic of social studies to take it to the depth necessary for students. They also may not have the support of other teachers in trying to create a sequence of learning in this subject area (Courtney, 1995). Some say that integration leads to better curriculum planning, but there is no firm proof of this because it is very hard to measure and there is no way to know if the planned curriculum is being taught. The final, hopeful, goal of integration is to lead students into the real world of work and life. Senesh et al.(1993) states that there is much internal and external disagreement about how to teach social studies. The use of integration is just one of these arguments. Though Schug and Cross may oppose it as the best method, Richburg & Nelson in 1998 wrote an article where they proposed that the geography content standards and higher order thinking be integrated into geography lessons for the students' best learning to occur.

Both educational and political leaders have had trouble framing a vision for social studies (Blanchard, 1999). Social studies have vital disciplines and ideas to help young people place themselves in the world. Students need to acquire these disciplines so that Harper's statement which was cited by Richburg and Nelson (1992, p.69) will be true. "Our task today is to discover how geography can best provide students with an understanding of the contemporary world in which they will live." Several programs have been tried to remediate this problem in the area of social studies: from Keltie's theories in 1888 to the organic curriculum called Our Working World by Senesh in 1973, to curriculum integration in social studies (Schug & Cross, 1998). Now the Goals 2000

Educate America Act is taking over the challenge, but as long as the programs keep changing, the learning will be sporadic and the same startling statistics will result.

With all of these well intentioned, but unsuccessful, attempts at improving the social studies curriculum what can be done to put together what is needed for the classroom? The National Council for the Social Studies is now working on new geography themes and standards that they think will help to heal the wound of poor performance in social studies (1994 to 2000). The five themes are: location, place, human/environment interaction, movement and region. There are 18 standards: 1) maps 2) globes & other tools 3) mental map 4) spatial organization 5) physical characteristics of a place 6) human characteristics of a place 7) Earth's changing complexity 8) culture and experience 9) physical processes of the Earth 10) distribution of ecosystems 11) migration of population 12) networks of economics 13) human settlement patterns 14) forces of cooperation and conflict 15) consequences of interactions both human and physical 16) changing resources 17) interpretations of the past 18) interpretations of the present and planning for the future (Adams, 1997). These themes and standards have been gleaned from the data in 628 manuscripts in October of 1999 by the Council for Social Studies Learning. Through these new avenues of organized goals the NCSS hopes to affect individual state standards to focus on improving the quality of geographic education. Of course, teacher awareness and new teacher training must accompany this movement.

A first year experience program (FYE) has been introduced into many colleges, says Sommers' (1997). It has been found, by following the hierarchy of social studies learning mentioned earlier, that students' skills in social studies not only increased, but they had a better outlook on their school and learning as whole. Researchers say this is fine for college, but that young children are not cognitively prepared to learn the same way. In fact Blaut (1997) Liben & Downs have done opposing articles on the fact that children 'can' or 'can't ' do maps according to their cognitive ability. What they (Blaut, and Liben & Downs) did all finally agree to was the fact that maps introduced early into curriculum and done often, in a degree of hierarchy that makes sense developmentally, will result in greater geographic learning.

Since I have been a teacher for over 20 years, I know from experienced observation and assessment in the classroom that children do have a great deal of trouble with map skills and understanding their own connection to the world beyond their town. This research opportunity has given me the chance to put together a program to benefit and increase student learning in this targeted curriculum area.

The research done has led me to the conclusion that this can best be accomplished by using the constructivist learning method with an emphasis on multiple intelligences. I will plan to guide the children through the themes and standards set by the NCSS at their cognitive level and use the chosen assessments to chart progress. Constructivism is "the theory that knowledge is built by the learner, not supplied by the teacher" (Johassen, Myers, McKillop, as

cited by Chen 1995). It is the child actively involved in the learning process, as opposed to the behaviorist theory that knowledge is outside of the student and must be instilled in them by the teacher (Scheurman, 1998). Whereas in most instances of behaviorist learning the child produces a product either from memory or on paper the constructivist learner may not produce a tangible product, but will have been given a broader background of knowledge base on which to build future skills. DiBartolomeo's (1999) definition of constructivism, as cited in Herman's article, is the basis for my intervention.

> Constructivism as we will use in our classrooms consists of providing an environment for the children to construct their own knowledge. Through a collaborative approach the students are able to learn and grow from the experiences and capabilities of each other. As their guides, we will provide them with a real and meaningful problem or project. (www.geocities.com/Research)

The collaborative method I am choosing is multiple intelligences. There is much research to indicate that teaching to a child's strengths will increase their learning (Shaw, 1998). Intelligence used to be more narrowly defined by paper pencil tests and seeing which students could make it in school (Lazear, 1992 as cited in Brualdi). However, in 1989 Gardner & Hatch (as cited in Brualdi) defined intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings". He believes children

are born with all seven (now eight) intelligences and that it is the responsibility of those in education to discover and teach to the child's best way to learn.

Though I was raised in, and taught for many years in, the paper and pencil mode of learning I have become convinced through my action research classes that this is an outdated and ineffective way to help a child become a lifelong learner. Therefore, through my intervention I employed constructivist learning and multiple intelligences to put the task of learning directly into the students' lap. It is the way to direct them toward open ended inquiry that will encourage reflection on the learning they themselves have constructed. The role of the teacher became facilitator. I believe the use of these methods allowed the children to learn through their strongest or best developed intelligence.

Project Objectives and Processes

Through my process of intervention I hope to increase the students' geographic skills and community understanding by using constructivist teaching methods. These methods will be in evidence in the classroom through the use of cooperative learning and multiple intelligences. As a result of using these teaching methods from a period of October 1999 through January 2000, the targeted second grade class will become more adept at creating their own learning in social studies. This will be measured by observations, test, checklists, journaling, and projects. In order to accomplish the final goal the following process will be necessary.

1. A plan will be created in the hierarchy of learning from general to specific.

2. Resources will be made available through the 8 multiple intelligence avenues to encourage children in the construction of their own learning.
3. Teacher guided learning through lesson plans will facilitate the students.
4. Final collection of data through projects, journal, tests, observations, checklists and surveys will complete the intervention.

Project Action Plan

The sixteen week intervention is being done in the constructivist teaching method which turns over the learning to the children. Specific lesson plans will accommodate the direction they take. In using the constructivist method, I plan to move from the behaviorists –where the teacher directs the learning from outside toward student directed learning. The problem, at least in part, stems from the instruction of geography which has always tended to be done in a behaviorist pattern. Which means it is teachers determining all the skills needed to lead up to the desired behaviors and responses making sure the students learn in a step-by-step manner (Roblyer, Edwards, and Havriluk, 1997, p.59 as cited in Conway). Directed teaching does not help the student to begin putting together any problem solving strategies on their own. However, the method of constructivism emphasizes the students' ability to solve problems in the classroom and work together in cooperative groups. Then they can focus on solutions to the problems of learning rather than just a sequence of content skills.

The teacher's job in the constructivist model is to arrange for the required resources and act as a guide. They set their own goals and 'teach themselves'. (Roblyer, Edwards, and Havriluk, 1997,.p.70 as cited in Conway).

Jonassen (1994 as cited in Chen) proposed eight characteristics of constructivist learning environments. Some of them were used in the intervention. Examples of Jonassen's list and how they were used follows:

Jonassen	classroom
avoid oversimplification of real world	children learned that there are schools, stores, homes all over the world, not just in their town
knowledge construction instead of knowledge reproduction	they drew their own maps, they did mental maps for each other they made games and they wrote stories
encourage thoughtful reflection	they did journal writing
have collaborative construction rather than competition	they worked in cooperative groups

Working with the constructivist method puts children in charge of their own learning but doesn't eliminate teacher guidance to assist them as they grasp concepts in their own best strength of instruction. Gardner's multiple intelligences theory further encourages them to work through their stronger intelligences so that they might find a way to better express themselves. Gardner defines intelligence as " the capacity to solve problems or to fashion

products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989, as cited in Brualdi). He discovered that there are at least eight intelligences that everyone possesses to some degree. They are: 1) logical mathematical 2) verbal/linguistic 3) visual/spatial 4) bodily/kinesthetic 5) musical/rhythmic 6) interpersonal 7) intrapersonal and 8) naturalistic. Involved in each one of these are many ways to learn. Each person has a stronger ability in some intelligences as opposed to others and since every classroom has children with differing abilities the multiple intelligences approach to learning covers a broader spectrum of learner. The intervention is going to enhance the abilities of the children by encouraging them to use skills from each of the intelligences so that they can improve their effectiveness in the learning and retention of geography skills. As the children will be working through the learning and forming their own conclusions the teacher guided plans will be flexible to accommodate the various changes that may occur. However, there will be a set pattern to the approach using the constructivist and multiple intelligence methods.

Week 1

observations, checklists, surveys and pre-test will be given to the students, parents and teachers.

Week 2 to 13

We will plan to study from the general to the specific in four areas that are named as the hierarchy for best approaching the teaching of social studies: local, state, national and world (NAEP, 1994).

The five themes and eighteen standards as previously named in this paper will be targeted as important. The eight multiple intelligences will be used to best teach to each students' learning mode. Within those boundaries the children will construct their own learning through reading, projects, journals, questions and whatever other activities they may want to implement

Each unit will have the following format:

K-W-L papers

Journals

t-shirt with representations of what they learned in the unit

trade book list with reports to be given

song or poem

cooperative group work

maps made in various ways (clay, drawn, computer)

guest speakers

videos

question lists for others to answer

the potential for any ideas the children create

Week 14 & 15

To finish off the intervention the checklists, observations, and surveys will be re-administered.

Week 16

This will be a Geography Fair of the childrens' own invention and initiative from what they have learned during the sixteen week period from

October to January. All the other classes, parents and teachers will be invited to participate. Photographs will be taken to record the event and be used in the exhibition in May.

Methods of Assessment

In order to determine the learning that took place during the 16 week intervention process the surveys, test, checklists, and observations will be used to gain cumulative results. However, since this is to be a student directed learning process the journals, stories, projects and Geography Fair that the children construct will also be taken into account.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this action research project was to increase student learning in social studies. Specific learning in the areas of geographic and community knowledge were targeted with constructivist learning and multiple intelligence theories.

I began the intervention by giving the class, parents and teachers a survey on what they thought was happening in social studies in school at this time (Appendix A). The responses from all involved were very informative and useful in planning the sixteen week intervention strategy.

I began by telling the children what we would be doing which would be learning about geography and the way people lived all over the world. Our first class activity was to put a stencil map of the world out on our blacktop to use as a reference for all future studies. This was stepping out of the intervention sequence of local to world. At first the map was too much for them to grasp, but repeated reference to it with the names of the continents and placing of Illinois gave them a sense of understanding they had not previously held. All the children were able to participate by helping to unroll the paper with the stencil and to tape it in place. Then I took white spray paint and filled in the dots to make the pattern. When the paint was dry we removed the stencil and saw the pattern we had made. Volunteer mothers came to connect the dots to form our world map.

After this we began the program I designed of working from the local area to the world in terms of acquiring new information and knowledge. It followed the state standards and those set by the National Geographic Council. The children did not have a lot of prior knowledge or experience to build on because in my district they do not start teaching social studies until second grade, which is the level of this targeted class. Most of our work was done in cooperative groups because this method lends itself well to constructivism. Each set of activities had a choice of multiple intelligences as the focus so that the children could choose the avenue that worked best for them. For example, we used story writing for the verbal/linguistic activities, there were songs to encourage the musical/rhythmic and drawing and map puzzles to motivate the bodily kinesthetic learner.

I introduced the geographic topic beginning with the local area and concluding with the world. For example the children would do the beginning of our K-W-L paper by filling in what they knew about their town. Information would then be researched in many ways. Sometimes books would be brought in from the library. At times we would get information from the computer, teacher knowledge would be accessed or they would bring information from home or from their own experiences. The children wrote in journals any new information that was learned. The information about the town would be further studied by writing poems, songs, making games, drawing maps, or using mind maps, writing stories or putting together short skits. The K-W-L papers had a big part in their writing experience. After they wrote down what they knew about the place we were studying, our town for example, they then wrote 2 to 3 statements telling

what they would like to know. The lessons would give them experience to learn the answers by using videos, discussions, reading, map drawing and games. We would return to the K-W-L for them to write a final statement on what they had learned about the unit we had studied. One ending activity was to have them draw on a paper t-shirt everything they could think of about the unit they had completed. Each ending activity also had an open discussion for the children to share. Children were encouraged to put thoughts in their journals for future reference. These reflections were to help them transfer the knowledge to other parts of their learning.

Most of the time I found that the groups worked well together. The classroom temperament is among the most mild I have ever experienced and so they all worked well together as friends. There are nine boys and eight girls in this targeted classroom. We used cooperative groups for most of our projects. At times I picked the groups and at others they chose. Group members were assigned jobs such as: reader, checker, and encourager. In my observations I noticed that there were group discussions and consensus of ideas. If a group was having trouble on a certain day then I gave them more guidance and attention. Teaching with the constructivist method and using multiple intelligences more than I had done in the past was also a learning experience for me. For example, before we began the units in geography I asked each of them to draw a map. Fourteen of the seventeen just had a few streets drawn in squiggly lines with no key or directions. After we had lessons on the compass rose and map keys the children then asked to draw maps of the town. This time thirteen out of seventeen had all the elements of a simple map so that anyone

knowing the place they were referring to could quite easily read the maps. They then decided to make map games using this knowledge. It is amazing to see how children can take charge of their own learning when given the direction and opportunity. This is only one example of what I learned about how the class created their own path for learning in this subject area.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

To assess the effects of this particular intervention strategy on the learning of the children several methods were used. Surveys, teacher observation and checklists were the main tools in the assessment process. (Appendix A). The checklist I used had 21 items. Fourteen of the seventeen children in the targeted classroom could explain only three to four items prior to the intervention. After the intervention ten of the children were able to define or place on a map 12 of the 21 checklist items.. There were some products, such as games, poems and songs, used to identify the gain in information, but much of it was done by teacher journaling and observation over the course of the intervention strategy. The criteria at this grade level in our school is all teacher generated because grades are not required until the upper levels.

The following tables will show the growth in understanding from the first surveys before the intervention until the project was done.

Table 5 What Happens in Social Studies?

learn a lot	0 no	17 yes	0 maybe
draw maps	2 no	13 yes	2 maybe
make projects	1 no	14 yes	2 maybe

geography is good	0 no	17 yes	0 maybe
maps are useful	0 no	17 yes	0 maybe
I know geography	0 no	17 yes	0 maybe
I know other places	0 no	16 yes	1 maybe
I'll learn more	0 no	16 yes	1 maybe

Table 2 What Happens in Social Studies?

learn a lot	1 no	15 yes	1 maybe
draw maps	1 no	8 yes	8 maybe
make projects	2 no	13 yes	2 maybe
geography is good	1 no	2 yes	7 maybe
maps are useful	2 no	8 yes	7 maybe
I know geography	10 no	4 yes	2 maybe
I know other places	1 no	5 yes	11 maybe
I'll learn more	1 no	13 yes	4 maybe

In comparing this to Table 2 from Chapter 2 it is possible to see that more children had yes answers after the intervention. They were uncertain about the purpose of social studies before the intervention, but they had a much clearer picture after use of the classroom strategies.

The next table is the second survey given to students with a different approach to it. The children were asked to respond with a scale number rather

than a word. For them this survey was a new approach and the children would have to think about their response in a deeper way. We will also compare it to the one in Chapter 2.

Table 6 Student Survey II

This is set up so that 4 is the top of the scale and 1 is the bottom.

	4	3	2	1
likes social studies	10	7		
easy	12	2	3	
projects	11	5		1
group work	15	2		
work alone	6	5	2	4
important	14		3	
hard	2		3	12

Table 3 Student Survey II

This is set up so 4 is at the top of the scale and 1 is at the bottom.

	4	3	2	1
like social studies	4	9	3	1
easy	3	9	3	1
projects	6	6	4	1
group work	10	4	2	
work alone	6	5	4	1
important	6	5	5	

hard	4	4	2	6

The biggest difference shown between these two tables is that more children now like social studies and do not find it to be as hard as they once thought. The evidence used to show this came from their comments in class and their journals. I believe this to be a significant accomplishment and one that I think shows the intervention strategy was successful.

Childrens' comments were not as abundant in the final two surveys, but the final opinions expressed were:

Social studies is fun.

I learned a lot.

I can read maps.

Everyone should like social studies.

I helped my dad read a map.

Examples of writing that the children did regarding their social studies experiences can be found in Appendix C. They were asked to write to their parents since all along they had been encouraged to discuss what we did in the classroom at home. To this researcher it was most significant that although the writing did not expound on a great deal of specific information learned 17 out of the 17 children wrote that they had learned about geography and were enjoying it.

The final survey was the parent survey and although there were not as many changes in tallies on it there were comments made that lead me to believe the parents also had a good experience with this social studies intervention.

Table 7 Parent Survey

child likes social studies	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes
talks about social studies	7 yes	0 no	10 sometimes
feels success	10 yes	0 no	7 sometimes
likes geography	14 yes	0 no	3 sometimes
read a map	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes
city/state difference	15 yes	1 no	1 sometimes
do hands-on for learning	16 yes	0 no	1 sometimes
geography is important	17 yes	0 no	0 sometimes
social studies is important to me	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes

Table 4 Parent Survey

child likes social studies	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes
talks about social studies	7 yes	0 no	10 sometimes
feels success	10 yes	0 no	7 sometimes

likes geography	14 yes	0 no	3 sometimes
reads a map	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes
city/state difference	15 yes	1 no	1 sometimes
do hands-on for learning	16 yes	0 no	1 sometimes
geography is important	17 yes	0 no	0 sometimes
social studies is important to me	15 yes	0 no	2 sometimes

Parent comments were:

1) My daughter's enthusiasm for geography has spread to her 6 year old brother!

2) The emphasis on hands on activities was wonderful. The map of the U.S. on the parking lot was also excellent. When I was at school once my granddaughter walked from place to place on it and showed me where different states were located. She also liked the songs and rhymes about the states.

3) My daughter has talked about maps, states and cities. She enjoyed making the U. S. map outside. She also liked the songs.

4) Social studies was one of my favorite subjects in school.

My son now seems to like it also. Keep up the good work.

5) Some days the cities and states are more difficult for my son to understand. I have tried to play games with him too and relfect on school subjects.

6) I can a see a positive difference with our child. She really enjoys social studies.

The parents seem to be in agreement with me that the constructivist method of teaching about geography using the multiple intelligences had a positive effect on the students' learning.

For me, this brings about a whole new understanding of how to approach teaching. I was taught in the 'stand, lecture, and be sure you do all the workbook pages method'. Then, as I gained practical experience and attended workshops in the different curriculum areas and seminars by speakers that help you build enthusiasm and appreciation for your work, I grew to have a broader perspective and found out that children can learn even if they do not sit still and listen all day. So I had gradually begun to change my method of teaching over the years to a more open perspective on how it could be done. I moved gradually from the stand and lecture method to letting them read and work on their subjects in groups. I discovered that sometimes a peer could be more helpful to another child than I could. It became apparent that some children were more interpersonal and some more verbal/linguistic etc., so I tried to teach to their strengths. Now that I have done the action research project, and done an intense intervention in one subject I am a firm believer that constructivism is the best way to teach, because the learner takes charge. At the targeted age of

second grade students still need guidance, but I have been amazed at the ideas, plans and retention of the learning that they had, simply because the responsibility of learning was put into their hands! The implications for teaching are marvelous and the possibilities endless.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Intervention strategies using constructivism and multiple intelligences would be highly recommended, in my opinion, as very productive while doing an action research project. The parameters for usefulness are broad and the approach of putting the children in charge of their own learning successful .

What I learned is that I made my topic too broad for the time frame and the cognitive level of my students. I had originally wanted to incorporate the connection between community and geography and, although we did learn a lot about community by association to what we did in geography there was too much information and not enough time to cover all of the topics as thoroughly as I had originally planned. Some of the skills I had hoped to teach in geography I also found to be beyond the knowledge of my seven to eight year old students. This has been one of the problems in teaching geography. There has not been a good sequence of study presented to teachers and students that starts them off with what they can best learn and then increases in difficulty as they advance. The NCGE hopes that their new standards will be more widely used. The six elements for teaching geography: world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and uses of geography are meant to increase knowledge and skills for the student. They should be taught in the sequence of general to specific with the learners' cognitive processes in

mind. After having followed them with my intervention I would recommend that as a good strategy.

I was very pleased with the survey results of both children and parents. They were all very cooperative, supportive and enthusiastic about the interventions. Learning in social studies took place at a higher degree than I have seen evidence of in my previous teaching. It has been a very positive experience for the other classrooms, as well, to see what was going on in our room. The other teachers have been given ideas and materials for the future. Overall the action research project for geography in this targeted classroom yielded high rewards for the children. Before the intervention, when three-fourths of the children were interested in geography, but did not know what to do with their questions about it, to after the intervention when three-fourths of the class had moved their knowledge and skill level beyond previous second grade expectations. Social studies had always been one of my favorite subjects. For so long I was frustrated and felt ineffective with the haphazard way in which I taught. Now I have discovered a new method that will transmit my enthusiasm to the classroom. This was one of my goals of teaching. If the children are enthusiastic about what they are learning they will want to continue to find answers. In the process of my action research I have found a way to recycle my thoughts and give a fresh approach to the job I love.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Pre-surveys

Pretests

Post surveys

Posttests

TEACHER SURVEY

Please indicate your thoughts about Social Studies and Geography on the following survey as it relates to your classroom and teaching experience.

Grade Taught _____

1. I enjoy teaching social studies. yes no sometimes

2. Geography is part of what I teach. yes no sometimes

3. Why do I enjoy social studies and geography?

4. Why don't I enjoy social studies and geography?

5. The children understand what geography is about.
   yes no sometimes

6. Geography skills within social studies are important for them to know.
   yes no sometimes

Explain why you think this is true.

7. What my grade level needs to improve learning in the area of geography is:

PARENT SURVEY

Please indicate what you believe to be your child's understanding of Social Studies and Geography by circling one answer for each statement.

1. My child likes social studies.
   yes no sometimes

2. My child talks about what we do in social studies.
   yes no sometimes

3. My child feels successful in social studies.
   yes no sometimes

4. My child likes geography
   yes no sometimes

5. My child can read a simple map.
   yes no sometimes

6. My child understands the difference between a city and a state.
   yes no sometimes

7. My child would learn more in social studies through hands-on projects.
   yes no sometimes

8. Knowledge of geography in social studies is an important skill.
   Yes no sometimes

9. Social studies is important to me as a parent.
   Yes no sometimes

Please share any further comments on this topic. They will be helpful.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

STUDENT SURVEY

Please indicate your thoughts about Social Studies using the following:

4 is best liked and 1 is the least liked.

1. I like social studies.	4	3	2	1
2. Social Studies is easy for me.	4	3	2	1
3. I like to read about social studies.	4	3	2	1
4. I like to do social studies projects.	4	3	2	1
5. Working in groups is something I like.	4	3	2	1
6. I like to work by myself in social studies.	4	3	2	1
7. Social studies is important to me.	4	3	2	1
8. Social studies is important to the world.	4	3	2	1
9. Social studies is hard for me.	4	3	2	1

WHAT HAPPENS IN SOCIAL STUDIES?

1. Students have to learn a lot.	no	yes	maybe
2. Students have to draw more.	no	yes	maybe
3. Students learn to make projects.	no	yes	maybe
4. Students have to think.	no	yes	maybe
5. Learning about geography is good.	no	yes	maybe
6. Learning about maps is useful.	no	yes	maybe
7. Learning about maps is not useful.	no	yes	maybe
8. I know what geography is.	no	yes	maybe
9. I know about where I live.	no	yes	maybe
10. I know about other places.	no	yes	maybe
11. Learning more interests me.	no	yes	maybe

STUDENT SURVEY

Please give your thoughts about Social Studies and Geography by making a circle around the best answer for you.

1. I like social studies.	yes	maybe	no
2. I like geography.	yes	maybe	no
3. Social studies is easy for me.	yes	maybe	no
4. I like maps.	yes	maybe	no
5. I like to do social studies projects.	yes	maybe	no
6. Working in groups is something I like.	yes	maybe	no
7. I like to work by myself.	yes	maybe	no
8. Social studies is important to me.	yes	maybe	no
9. Geography is important to me.	yes	maybe	no
10. Geography is important to everyone.	yes	maybe	no
11. Social Studies is hard for me.	yes	maybe	no

Parent Survey — September '99

	y	n	sometimes
1	𝍸 𝍸 ||||	|	||
2	𝍸 |	|||	𝍸 |||
3	𝍸 ||||	|	𝍸 ||
4	𝍸 𝍸 |	||	||||
5	𝍸 |	𝍸	𝍸 |
6	𝍸 𝍸 |		𝍸 |
7	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |		|
8	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||		
9	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸		||

First student Survey

I like to use maps. I like projects. I don't know if I like geography because I don't know if I've ever used it. The survey itself was in the wrong format. Ray did not understand it and had a great deal of trouble making answers so I threw it out. However, I kept the comments.

Maps are fun to try to figure out.
I like maps because it is fun to look at them.
I bet maps are fun.
I like learning.
I like maps.
I like social studies.
I like a map to look at, but do not like social studies
I like maps & this is hard (survey) I like to do projects.
|| This is hard

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Student Survey Sept. '99

	y	maybe	n
1	𝍸	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸
2	𝍸	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸
3	𝍸	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸
4	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
5	𝍸	𝍸	
6	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
7	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
8	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
9	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
10	𝍸	𝍸	𝍸
11		𝍸	𝍸

I want to learn about mountains.
I do want to learn about geography.
Miss W. I like projects.
I want to know about Social Studies.
I do not know if I like s.s.
It might be fun.
I like to do s.s.
I want to learn about FL
Geography is so fun.
I like social studies
I bet geography is fun!
I love s.s. I love maps.
I am excited to begin.

What Happens in Sex. Ed. class? Sept '99

	n	y	maybe
1		𝍸 𝍸 ||||	||
2	|	𝍸 |||	𝍸 |||
3	||	𝍸 𝍸 |||	||
4		𝍸 𝍸 ||||	|||
5	|	𝍸 𝍸 ||	||||
6	||	𝍸 |||	𝍸 ||
7	𝍸 𝍸	||||	||
8	𝍸 |||	|||	𝍸
9	||||	𝍸 |||	||||
10	|||	𝍸 ||	𝍸 |||
11		𝍸 𝍸 ||	||||

~~Student~~ Survey Sept '99

	4	3	2	1
1	||||	𝍸 ||||	|||	
2	|||	𝍸 ||||	|||	|
3	𝍸 |	𝍸 |	||||	|
4	𝍸 𝍸	||||	||	
5	||||	||||	𝍸 |	||
6	𝍸 |	𝍸	||||	|
7	𝍸 |	𝍸	𝍸	
8	𝍸 𝍸	||||	|	|
9	||||	||||	||	𝍸 |

Parent Survey Tally 2-00

	y	n	sometimes
1	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸		II
2	𝍸 II		𝍸 𝍸
3	𝍸 𝍸		𝍸 II
4	𝍸 𝍸 IIII		III
5	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸		II
6	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	I	I
7	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 I		II
8	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 II		
9	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸		II

Student Survey

	y	n	maybe
1	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 I		II
2	𝍸 𝍸 I		𝍸 I
3	𝍸 𝍸 IIII		III
4	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸		II
5	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 I		I
6	𝍸 𝍸 II		IIII
7	𝍸 III	III	𝍸 I
8	𝍸 𝍸 III		IIII
9	𝍸 𝍸 II		𝍸
10	𝍸 III	I	𝍸 II
11		𝍸 𝍸 II	𝍸

What happens in Social Studies?

	n	y	maybe
1		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	
2	||	𝍸 𝍸 |||	||
3	|	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 |
4		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	
5		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	|
6		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 ||	
7	𝍸 𝍸 |||	||	|
8		𝍸 𝍸 |||	|||
9		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	|
10		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	|
11		𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 |	|

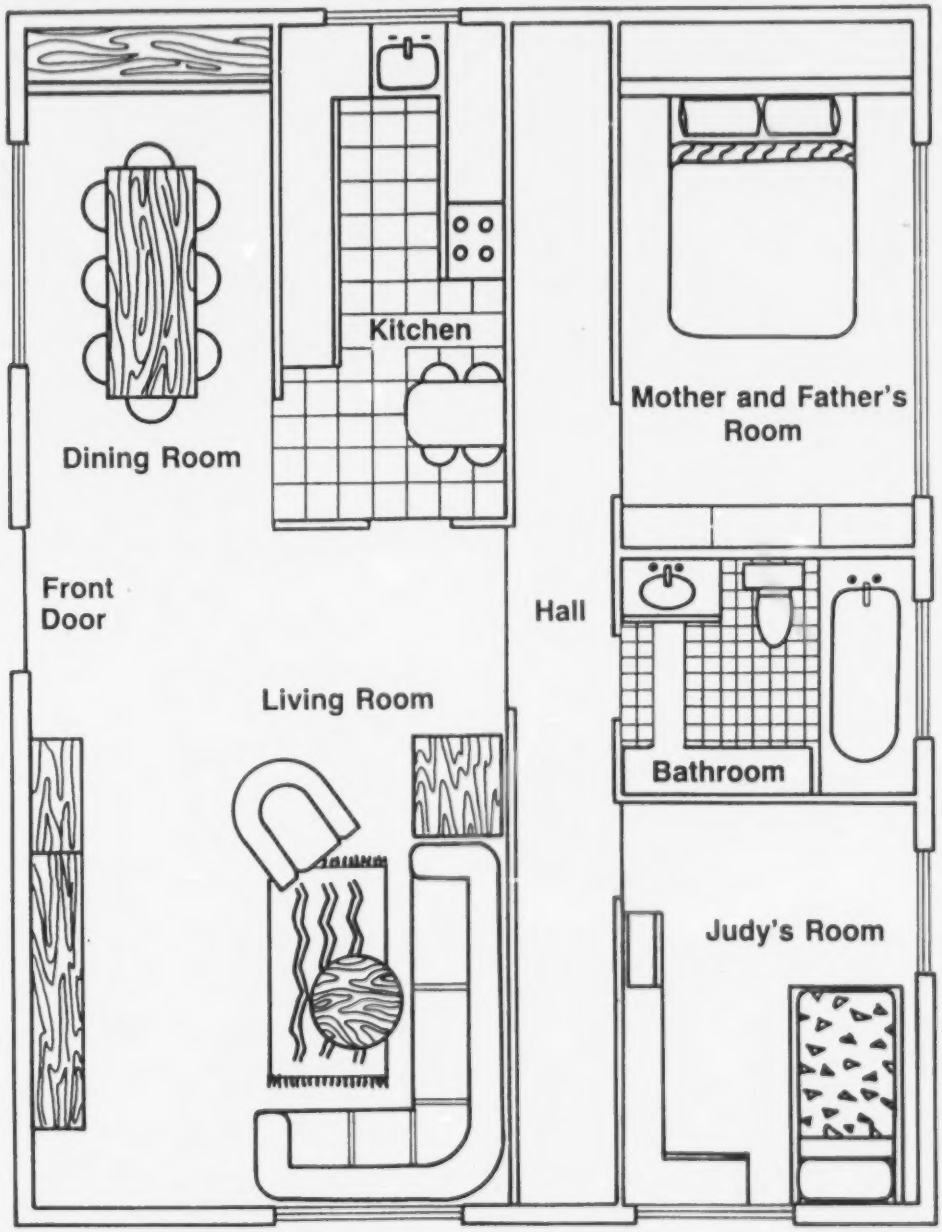
Student Survey

	4 best			1 least
	4	3	2	1
1	𝍸 𝍸	𝍸 ||		
2	𝍸 𝍸 ||	||	|||	
3	𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸		|
4	𝍸 𝍸 𝍸	||		
5	𝍸 𝍸 |	||	||	||
6	𝍸 |	𝍸	||	||||
7	𝍸 𝍸 ||||		|||	
8	𝍸 𝍸 ||||		||	|
9	||		|||	𝍸 𝍸 ||

Name

1 Floor Plan

What kind of place does this floor plan show?

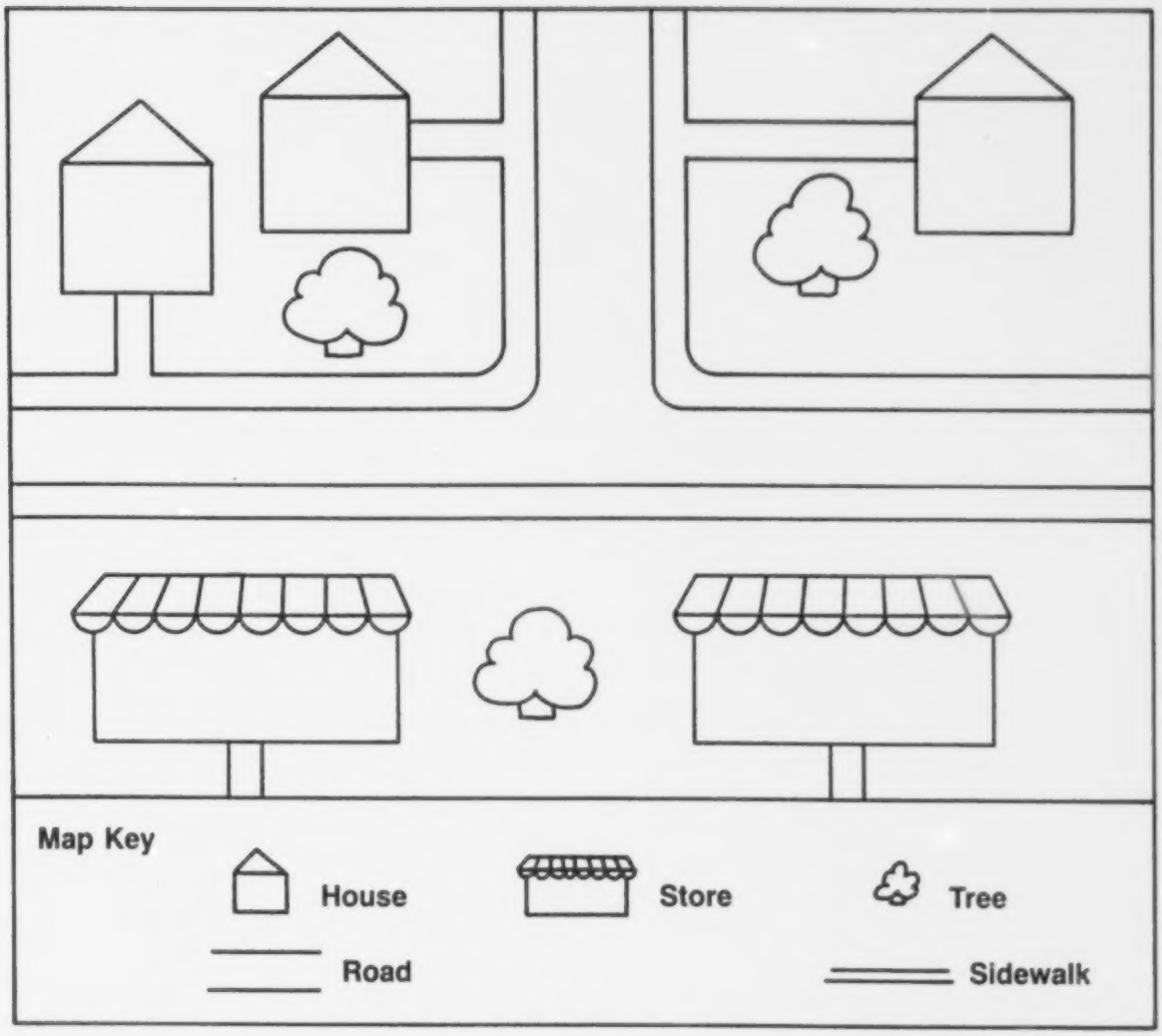


Children discuss and color places shown on a floor plan.

Name

2 Neighborhood Map

Why does this map have symbols? What does this map show?



2 **Reviewing Maps and Globes** Children discuss and color places shown on a neighborhood map.

Children discuss places on a map of our country.

BEST COPY

Name

3 The United States

This is a map of our country. Can you find your state?

AVAILABLE

APPENDIX B

Student Lessons

SOCIAL STUDIES CHECKLIST

Student Name_____ Date_____

Can locate places beyond neighborhood	____	_____	_____	_____
Understands global climate	____	_____	_____	_____
Knows about movement of goods	____	_____	_____	_____
Identifies regions other than his/her own	____	_____	_____	_____
Identifies community jobs	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes traditions of culture	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes and responds to multicultural literature	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes national identify	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes diversity of U.S. citizens	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes national symbols	____	_____	_____	_____
Knows the Pledge of Allegiance	____	_____	_____	_____
Knows patriotic songs	____	_____	_____	_____
Develops respect for others	____	_____	_____	_____
Makes observations	____	_____	_____	_____
Observes community	____	_____	_____	_____
Identifies U.S. flag	____	_____	_____	_____
Identifies other flags	____	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes symbols for maps	____	_____	_____	_____
Describes routes	____	_____	_____	_____
Constructs map w/scale and key	____	_____	_____	_____

Understands human and environmental interaction (recycle, earth day, etc.) ____ _____ _____ _____

Understands world regions ____ _____ _____ _____

Participates in class_____

Cooperates in group_____

Other comments_____

_____

_____

_____

KNOW

WANT TO KNOW

W

LEARNED

TOWN JOURNAL

DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS

STATE JOURNAL

DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS

U.S.A. JOURNAL

DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS

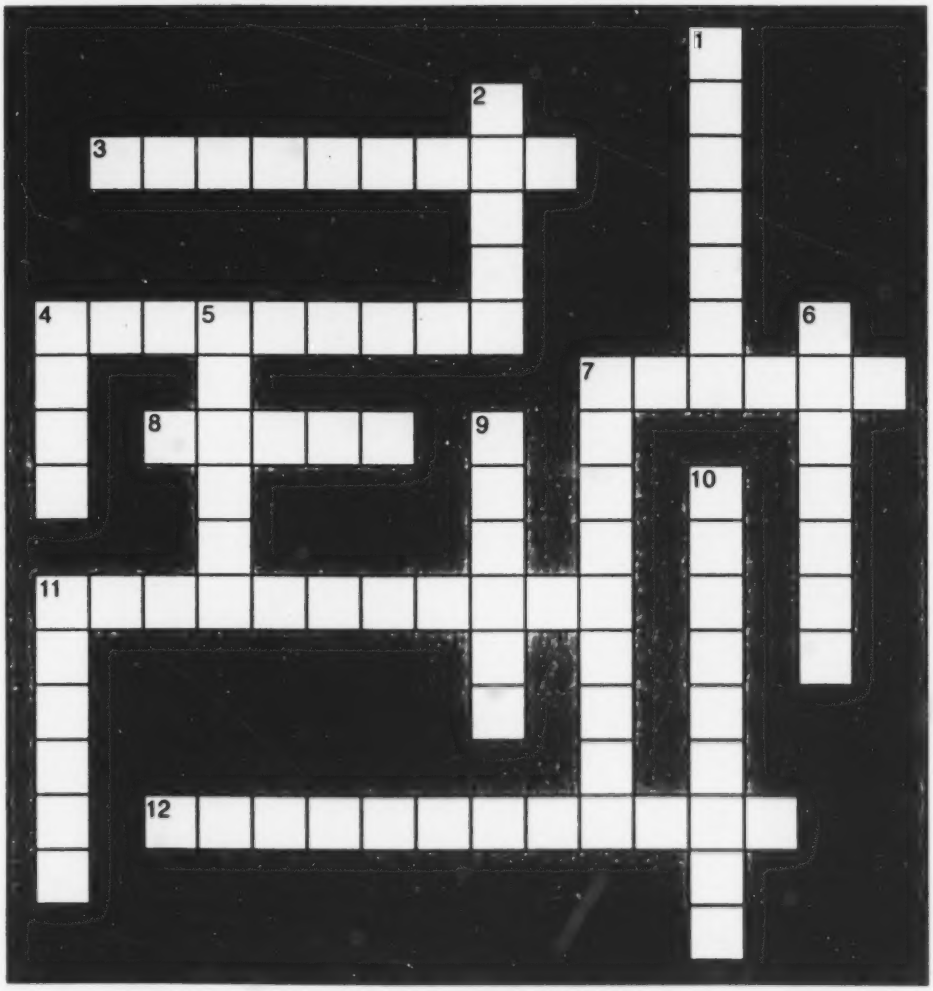
WORLD JOURNAL

DRAW YOUR THOUGHTS

Around My Community

A Crossword Puzzle

Fill in the names of these people who work in a town.



Word Bank

barber
busdriver
carpenter
clerk
cook
doctor
farmer
firefighter
librarian
mayor
plumber
police
secretary
teacher
veterinarian

Across

3. the person in charge of a library
4. a person who builds and repairs wooden buildings
7. a person who cuts hair
8. a person who sells things in a store
11. a person who puts out fires
12. a person who takes care of sick animals

Down

1. a person who puts in and fixes water pipes
2. the person at the head of a town government
4. a person who prepares food
5. people who arrest criminals
6. a person who teaches others
7. a person who drives a large vehicle used to take people from place to place
9. a person who takes care of people when they are sick
10. a person who writes letters and keeps records for a business or group
11. a person who raises crops and animals

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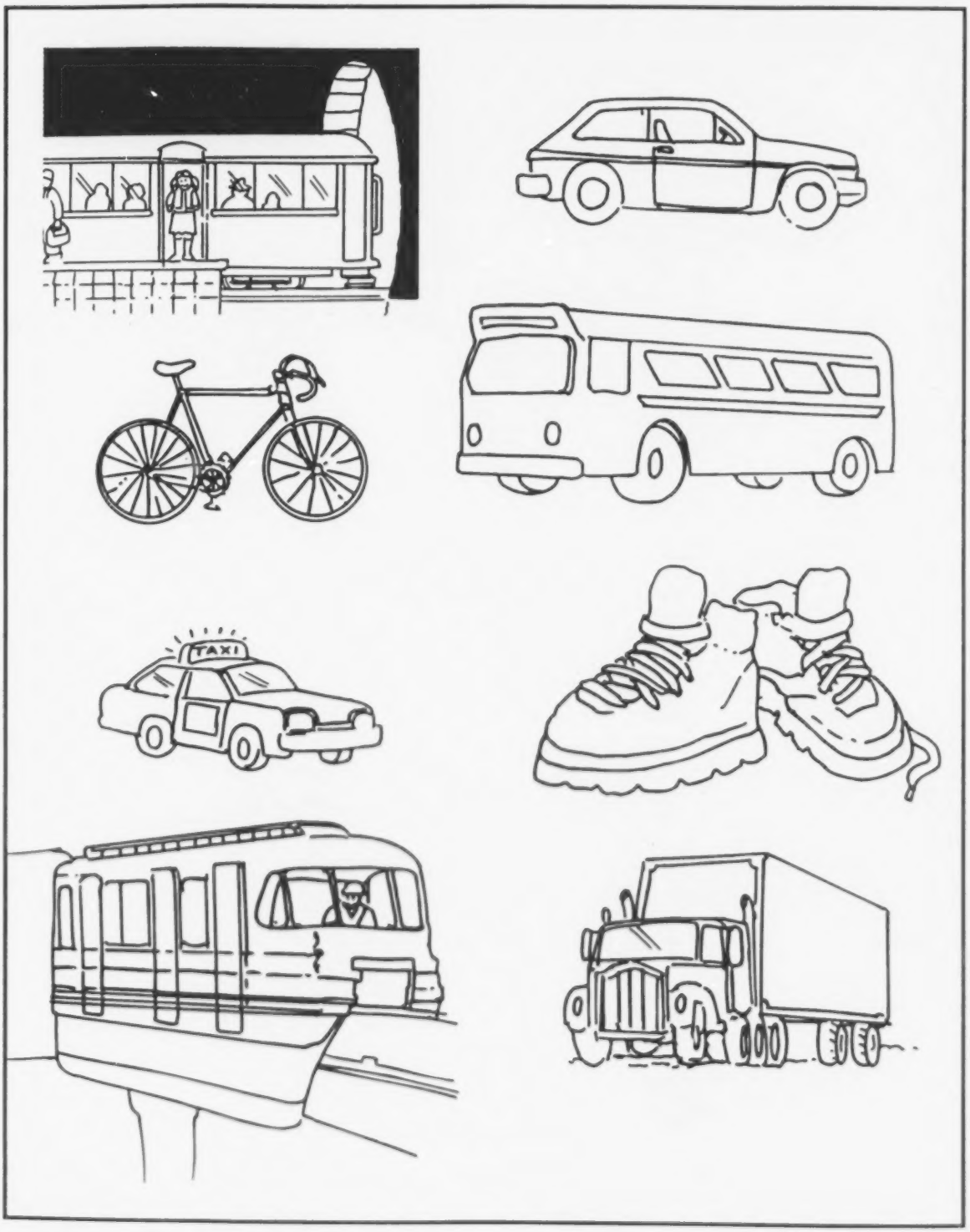
Transportation in My Community

Color the kinds of transportation that are in your community.



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Social Studies Book List for 2nd Grade Goodfield 1999-2000

Day the Hurricane Happened Anderson, Lonzo

Most Delicious Camping Trip Ever Bach, Alice

A Mexican Tale Balet, Jan

Children of the Forest Beskow, Elsa

Barto Takes the Subway Brenner, Barbara

Gordon Goes Camping Brinckloe, Julie

Chinese Children Next Door Buck, Pearl

Seasons Burningham, John

Little House Burton, Virginia

Bell for Ursli Chonz, Selina

Miss Rumphius Cooney, Barbara

Social Studies Book List for 4th Grade Goodfield '99-'00

Caddie Woodlawn Brink, Carol

A Lion to Guard Us Bulla, Clyde

Children of Shora DeJong, Meindert

Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates Dodge, Mary

The Twenty-one Balloons DuBois, William

Seashells in My Pocket Hansen, Judith

Misty of Chincoteague Henry, Marguerite

The House at Pooh Corner Milne, A.A.

Owls in the Family Mowat, Farley

Heidi Spyri, Johanna

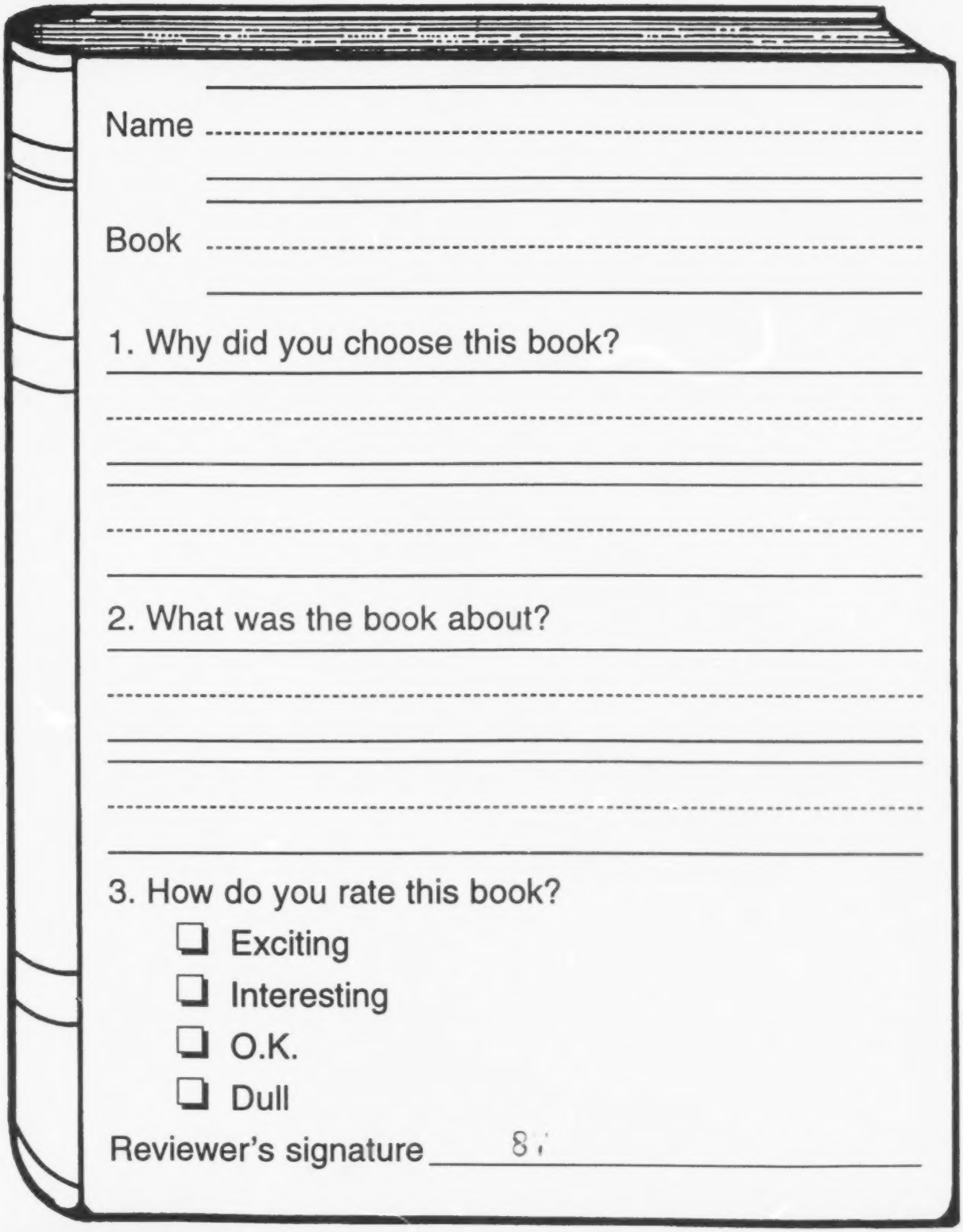
Abel's Island Steig, William

Little House (any in the series) Wilder, Laura Ingalls

Cranberry Thanksgiving Devlin, Wendy & Harry

Josephine's Imagination Dobrin, Arnold

Book Review Form



Name _____

Book _____

1. Why did you choose this book?

2. What was the book about?

3. How do you rate this book?

- ❑ Exciting
- ❑ Interesting
- ❑ O.K.
- ❑ Dull

Reviewer's signature _____

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DESIGN A T-SHIRT

In airports in every state there are shops that sell T-shirts emblazoned with logos or other symbols of the state. Often you can learn a lot about a state by looking at these T-shirts. Pretend you have been commissioned by a state to design a T-shirt that will catch attention and tell others important information about the state. Design the T-shirt.

State name _____

WRITING A SONG ABOUT A STATE

Select a state to write about:

Name _____

What is the capital of the state? _____

Name one large city in the state _____

Name three products manufactured in the state: _____

_____ and _____

Name three crops grown in the state: _____

_____ and _____

Use this information in the song pattern below. Complete the song below by filling in the missing information about the state.

Sing to: "She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain"

She'll be coming from _____ when she comes
(capital of the state)

She'll be coming from _____ when she comes
(large city)

She'll bring _____ and _____ and _____
(name three products from the state)

She'll bring _____ and _____ and _____
(name three crops grown in the state)

She'll be coming from _____ when she comes.
(name of the state)

Materials:

dough recipe
reference map
wax paper if needed
different colored sprinkles
blue icing
chocolate chips
m &ms
red/black pull apart licorice

Dough Recipe:

2 c smooth peanut butter
2 &1/2 c powdered milk
2 & 1/2c powdered sugar
2c white corn syrup

Mix well. Use the map to help shape your copy of a state or country. Decorate, name and eat.

Geography Fair

S L E Y C D I I B B P P M G S C W R V S

T S D U Z O L Z F K B G L D E O V I P F

Q U A A N L U Z M F P B R R I M F A J J

Y X E P I M I N P O G P J A D M M P F P

K W P N M E P O T R C F C G U U H X J W

W L O N L O H G C R K P O Y T N Y J R S

V I U G R W C T Y E I H I G S I E W I A

S S T A T E S L R U A E I O L T S J Z Y

V G O V M N D X Z A A N S L A Y O Y U P

R T O C W B E M R I E Q S O I Y R L S Y

Z J Y O G D Y Y X T P X L C C Y W T U H

L P R F E K B U N X N A J E O Y N A D N

D L J T E E G I R B W X Y J S E N H A O

D A I X J K A L G G M X Q C N T W X H M

B N J A K L C M B L J T M I N W D A C U

U K F T N H N G U O M I T Y Q O M O W Y

G E O G R A P H Y B I N S T C U D O R P

K P D V U A H D P E O P Z H D H A Z M D

D A S D A O R Q E C A Q F K L D N F C B

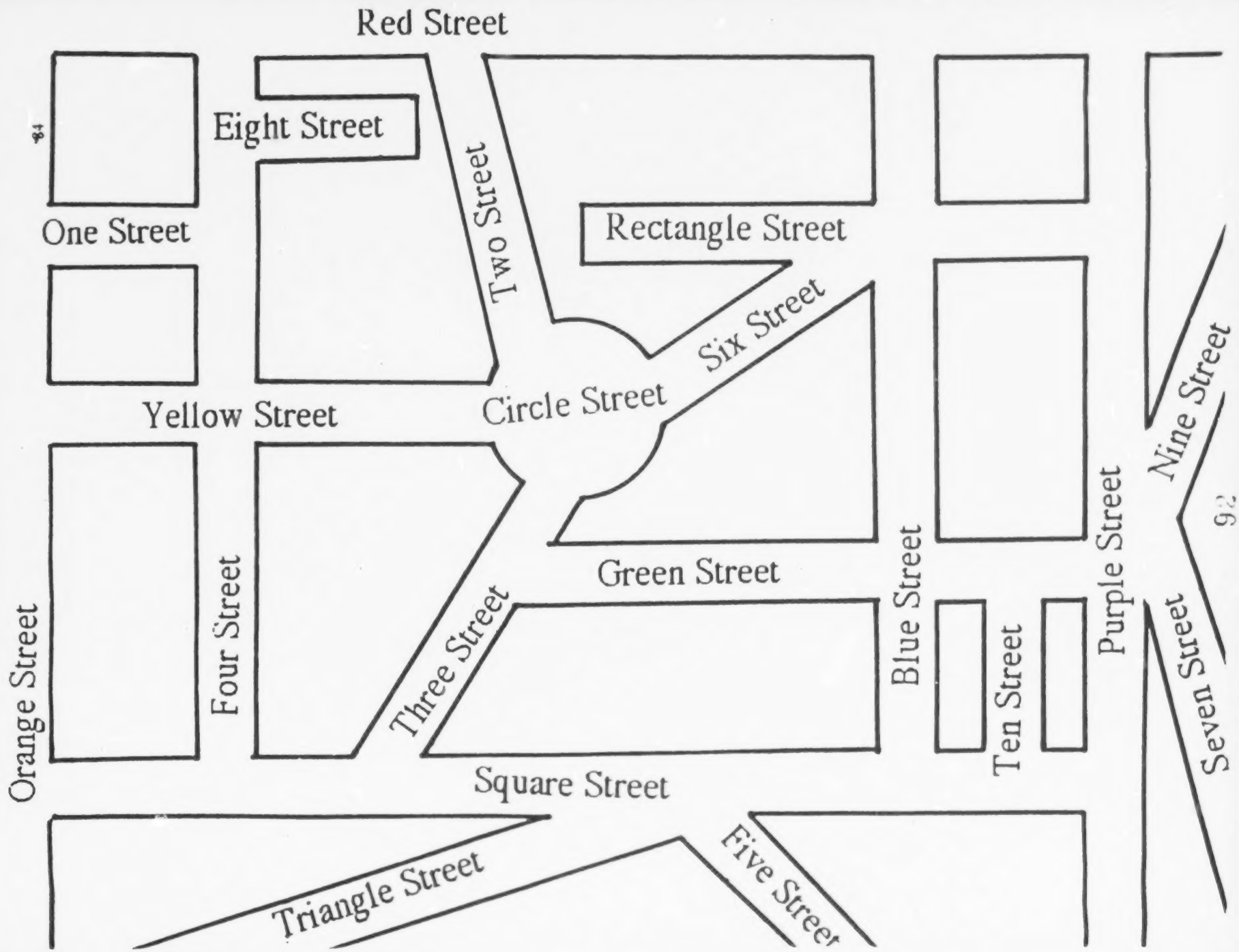
L X Y C Z N P U W Y I E M E U Q X Z N E

COMMUNITY
COMPASS
CONTINENTS
COUNTRIES
EARTH
ECOLOGY
GEOGRAPHY
GLOBE
ILLINOIS
MAPS
OCEANS
PRODUCTS
ROADS
ROSE
SOCIALSTUDIES
STATES
UNITED
WORLD

18 of 18 words were placed into the puzzle.

Solution

Visit Puzzlemaker at Discovery Channel School
www.discoveryschool.com


Red Street
Eight Street
Two Street
One Street
Rectangle Street
Six Street
Yellow Street
Circle Street
Nine Street
Orange Street
Four Street
Three Street
Green Street
Blue Street
Purple Street
Ten Street
Seven Street
Square Street
Triangle Street
Five Street

Parent Brochure

How Can We Help Children Learn Geography?

A recent survey revealed that one in five Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 could not locate the United States on an outline map of the world. What explains this lack of geographic knowledge? In the United States, geography is not considered a basic academic course. Geography content in the middle grades (5-8) is often integrated into a world history or social studies course, and only one student in seven takes a high school geography course.

Although courses in geography are indeed crucial to geographic understanding, students will derive true knowledge of world geography only if parents and teachers place emphasis on geographic themes through application activities on a day-to-day basis. Maps, globes, and atlases should be daily resources to answer questions about location, regions, climates, movement of people, and the relationship between places and the characteristics of the people that live there. A solid foundation in geography should begin with preschoolers; five- year-olds can construct three-dimensional maps of the classroom to begin to understand symbolic representation and spatial relationships.

What Should Children Learn About Geography?

Children should know the locations of places and peoples. They should understand why communities are located in particular places, how people have shaped them, and how they have affected people's lives. They also should be able to use their knowledge of geography to solve problems and make decisions in daily life.

Geographers and geography educators across the United States have developed five fundamental themes to help children learn geography. These themes have been endorsed by the Association of American Geographers, the National Council for Geographic Education, and the National Geographic Society and have been widely adopted in schools to teach geography. Each theme is listed and described below in conjunction with a question to help parents and teachers focus children's thinking geographically.

- **Location** -- the positions of people and places on the earth's surface. Where in the world are places located?
- **Place** -- the physical and human characteristics that distinguish one place from other places. What makes a place special?
- **Relationships Within Places** -- the interactions of humans with their environments that shape the characteristics of peoples and places. What are the interactions among people and places that explain how we shape and are shaped by our environment?
- **Movement** -- the human interactions on the earth-people, products, and information-that affect the characteristics of places. What are the global patterns of movement of people, products, and information?
- **Regions** -- how they form and change. How can the earth be divided into regions to help us understand similarities and differences of peoples and places?

What Can Be Done in Schools To Enhance Children's Knowledge of Geography?

If youngsters are to acquire an appreciation of the physical world in which they live and ultimately learn to think geographically, schools must restore geography as a prominent course in the curriculum. Schools can take the following steps to ensure that students become competent in their knowledge of the world around them:

- Increase coverage of geography at every grade level of the school curriculum. Children cannot achieve geographic literacy unless they have ample exposure to the subject.
- Teach geography as a separate school subject. In addition, encourage teachers to infuse the five geographic themes into other school subjects, such as history, economics, and earth science.
- Add depth to studies of this subject. Avoid mentioning many geographic facts while investigating few in depth.
- Use multiple sources and media of instruction, such as video programs, primary documents, computer software, wall maps and charts, globes and atlases, and periodicals with numerous pictures and maps. Avoid reliance on standard textbooks.
- Emphasize active learning by applying knowledge to investigate real geographic problems.
- Use the local community as a resource for examples of the five geographic themes. Involve children in hands-on investigations of nearby places such as farms or parks.

What Can Be Done At Home?

Parents can enhance their child's knowledge of geography by advocating its emphasis in the school curriculum, but learning should not be restricted to the classroom. Parents can do many things to stir their children's curiosity and make geography fun to learn. Games, maps, and other activities are informal and easy ways to encourage geographic awareness and lay a solid foundation.

As your child's first teacher, you can have an ongoing impact on your child's knowledge of geography by monitoring and reinforcing lessons presented at school. You can reinforce school learning by doing the following things at home:

- Read stories from or about other countries and books that describe journeys.
- Make different ethnic foods or take your child to ethnic restaurants.
- Give children an opportunity to travel by car, bus, bicycle, or on foot. If available, try other forms of transportation, such as planes, trains, subways, ferries, or horse-drawn carriages.
- Teach your child positional words (above, below) and directions (north, south, east, west) and use these words in your daily conversations.
- Use the library to discover how other cultures celebrate holidays. Discuss customs, dress, and food.
- Invite friends or neighbors who are from different countries or who have traveled or lived abroad to talk with your child about their experiences.
- Use maps and encourage your child to make his or her own maps.
- Encourage family viewing of television programs with geographic content and participate with children in post-program discussions of geographic themes and issues.
- Use pictures from books and magazines to help your child associate words such as *desert*, *volcano*, and *rain forest* with visual images.
- Seek opportunities to examine and discuss geographic themes with your child as you encounter them in daily activities in your home and neighborhood.

The above recommendations are firmly rooted in studies that reveal geography concepts

should be taught through concrete activities, begun early, and applied to everyday experiences. Schools certainly have a role to play in developing geographic understanding, but the home is an ideal setting for applying what is learned in practical ways so children will realize the importance of geography in their lives.

Sources

Most of the following references -- those identified with an ED or EJ number -- have been abstracted and are in the ERIC database. The journal articles should be available at most research libraries. For a list of ERIC collections in your area, contact ACCESS ERIC at 1-800-LET-ERIC.

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For more information on this subject, contact:

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Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
(800) 266-3815 (812) 855-3838
http://www.indiana.edu/~ssdc/eric_chess.htm

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TITLE: How Can We Help Children Learn Geography?
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PUBLISHED: Fall 1992

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This page was updated on 10/26/1999

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GEOGRAPHY FAIR BOOTHS

Game of the states
Songs about the U.S.
Talking globe
Draw a state
Cookie walk- state names & pictures on the floor/must say capitol to win
Guess a state by the shape
Guess a continent by the shape
Concentration state match
edible maps
hide map pieces or mix names
coloring contest
pin the name on the state
poems/ dance
spell the state
draw a simple map
mind maps-tell a person where to go in our building by right and left turns, up or down stairs etc and see if they can do it
write a story about someplace we have been
slap / clap city name game

This was our brainstorming list. We chose the following for the day of the Geography Fair:

Songs about the states—information from the internet was put on the table along with the blank song sheets

Talking globe

Cookie walk

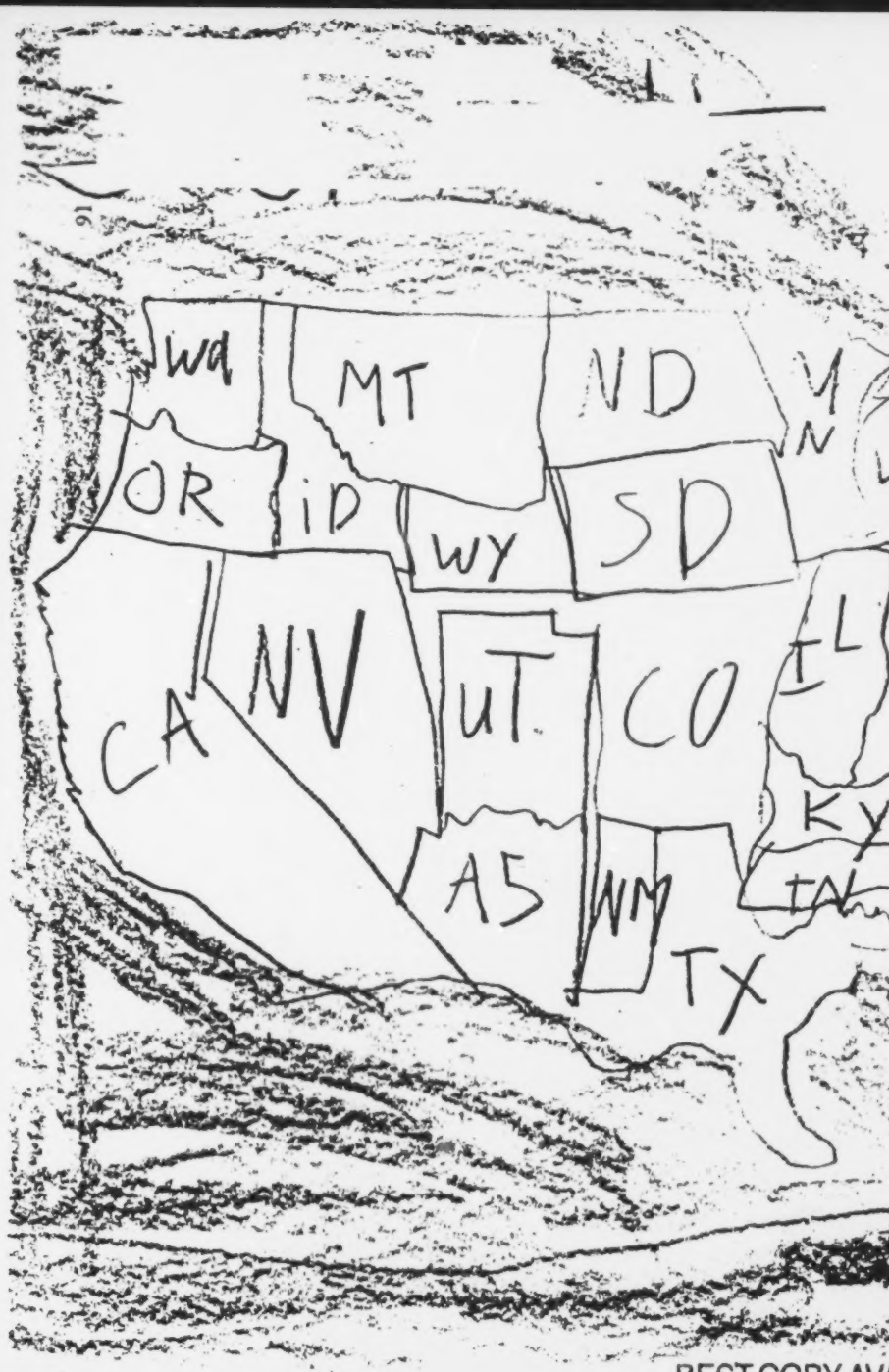
Concentration state match

Edible map activity

Put together the large U.S. floor map and mix the names for the adults to fix

APPENDIX D

Children's Work



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